
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2025

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3366304

St Joseph's College, 64 Upper Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5JT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Rachel Sarah Sheridan against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/0590.
 - The development proposed is replacement windows, replacement roofing and the provision of PV panels to the South facing roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's second reason for refusal refers to the harmful impact of the proposed solar panels on the south facing roof slope of the appeal building. The appellant indicates that they do not wish to appeal that element of the scheme. Accordingly, my assessment of this appeal, solely relates to the proposed replacement windows and roofing.
3. For the purposes of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act), a listed building includes any structure fixed to the building and any free-standing structure erected before 1 July 1948 within the curtilage of the listed building. This applies irrespective of whether or not it has been explicitly identified in the list description.
4. The appellant's Heritage Statement refers to the appeal building as "curtilage-listed" on account of its historical and functional association with Broad Oak, House, a grade II listed building. Therefore, I have treated it as being part of the listed building.
5. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to section 66(1) of the Act.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed replacement windows on the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, Broad Oak House.

Reasons

7. Broad Oak House, a Grade II listed building, dates from between 1870-1890s. This former convent set back from Upper Redlands Road, comprises a two and half storey red brick building. Its impressive façade includes stone bands, double

height gables and bays and symmetrical dormer windows. The building was later extended in the early 20th century with the addition of three imposing brick-built ranges, and other buildings, to the east of Broad Oak House. These adjoining structures are distinguished by their consistency of form and architectural detail. Prominent design features include the numerous white painted, timber sash windows that have a repetitive and highly distinctive arrangement across the south elevation of all the blocks. Along with the brick elevations and gables, the windows convey a clear sense of architectural unity which contributes to the special interest and significance of these buildings insofar as they relate to Broad Oak House.

8. Block B is the eastern most range. The existing timber windows, many of which include multi-hung awning casements, with timber frames and glazing bars, would be replaced with UPVC frames encasing triple-glazing. The design of the proposed windows would be similar, insofar as they'd incorporate awning openings.
9. The specification of the existing windows is somewhat limited, nonetheless from my observations on site their traditional timber construction is likely authentic and characteristic of the period when the building was constructed.
10. There is no cross-section drawing of the proposed UPVC windows. However, given that the glazing would be triple glazed and thicker than the existing windows, the proposed plastic frames would likely have a heavier profile to encase the new glazing that would contrast with the thinner timber frames of the existing openings. The frames of the proposed windows would also have a shiny and unblemished appearance, reflecting their modern construction and material. In this respect the manufactured woodgrain effect would lack the authenticity and the craftsmanship of traditionally constructed timber windows which age over time. Moreover, traditional timber windows have thinner frames and a more matt and uneven finish, as was noted across all the older buildings within the school's curtilage.
11. The wholesale replacement of the windows within Block B with UPVC units would result in a significant loss of the older, timber windows. From within the grounds of the school, and from sequential views of its various built phases, the proposed modern, UPVC windows would appear as unauthentic and discordant additions that would harmfully erode the character and architectural coherence of Broad Oak House, and its connecting buildings. There would also be an unacceptable loss of historic fabric relating to Block B.
12. The appellant highlights that the proposed windows largely retain the four-casement design of the existing openings. However, they would have a thicker profile and be inconsistent with the more authentic timber frames evident across the school buildings. They would therefore undermine the heritage value that the existing buildings retain.
13. The existing windows, according to the appellant, present an ongoing health and safety concern, and their replacement would immediately address this. However, those health and safety concerns could also be resolved through the repair of the existing windows or their replacement with timber framed equivalents that would preserve the special interest of the building. Accordingly, that argument does not overcome the harm I have found.
14. The appellant refers to inconsistent decision making on the part of the Council, who had previously allowed modern glazing on the addition that forms the school's main reception. The design and appearance of that glazing differs to the rest of the

window openings, however, it is a much later addition that does not form part of the early 20th century expansion, to which the appeal proposal relates. Moreover, I have not been presented with any details which explain the reasons for approving that addition or the policies upon which it was assessed.

15. It is acknowledged that the appeal building, and the listed Broad Oak House would not be clearly seen from publicly accessible areas, including Upper Redlands Road. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
16. The proposal includes the provision of replacement roof tiles on Block B. These would be consistent with the design and colour of the existing materials. For this reason, they would preserve the special interest and significance of the appeal building.
17. Drawing all the above together, the placement of the proposed windows in the style proposed would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, Broad Oak House. In doing so, the proposal would cause harm to the significance of that designated heritage asset. This would conflict with Policies CC7 and EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, where they require proposals to retain the character and appearance of the area and to protect the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The statutory presumption set out in section 66(1) of the Act would also be breached.
18. As far as other material considerations are concerned, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) tells us that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The Framework distinguishes between the approaches to take when the harm that would be caused to the significance of an asset would be 'substantial' or 'less than substantial'.
19. In this case, bearing in mind that the listed building encompasses several connecting buildings relating to Broad Oak House, and that the bar for finding of substantial harm is a high one, I find that the harmful impact of the proposal on the significance of the listed building as a designated heritage asset would be within the middle range of 'less than substantial' but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
20. Where less than substantial harm is found, the Framework says that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes securing the asset's optimum viable use.
21. The appellant suggests that the proposal is a cheaper alternative to the repair of the existing windows and would result in lower maintenance costs. Yet there is limited information on whether the continued viable use of the appeal property as a school is dependent on the proposal and that its use would cease without the proposed windows.
22. Although the use of double glazing within timber frames is feasible, while thick window blinds or curtains can effectively retain heat, I accept that there might be some minor public benefit in increasing the energy efficiency of the school through using triple glazing that could improve heat retention within Block B. However, bearing in mind the great weight that must be given to the conservation of

designated heritage assets, a matter that has statutory force given the workings of the Act, I do not consider the minor benefits to be anywhere near sufficient to justify the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset that would be caused. As such the proposals fall contrary to the Framework as well as the development plan.

Conclusion

23. The proposal would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

RE Jones

INSPECTOR